



June 27, 2014

### **ZEPNICK OP ED: Working Families need our help.**

Summer is here, and with Summer I've been out spending a lot of time talking to the working families on Milwaukee's south side at various festivals, picnics and other events. As such, I've heard time and time again of how our families and workers need help. I've heard stories of how people can't take the time to take care of sick children, or dying relatives because they don't have the flexibility at work. Stories like these break my heart, and are why next session the first bill I am going to work on is a Paid Sick leave proposal. Paid sick leave gives families greater flexibility and helps keep our families healthy.

In fact, over the past week President Barrack Obama hosted a White House Summit on Working Families. This summit brought together leaders from across the country to talk about the issues facing our families, specifically working parents. Quite frankly, it's not the 1950s anymore, and workplaces have not adapted to the way working families need to work.

Statistics show that there are more dual-income households today, and our economy needs to adapt to the needs of modern, working families. Businesses are beginning to reform and offer greater flexibility in the workplace, but many families continue to face very real and very difficult problems in their daily lives.

In too many families, it's difficult to care for a newborn at home, or pick up a sick child from school. Workers, who make a minimum wage, remain in poverty and have trouble providing for their families.

If we want families to succeed, we need to work to give families more flexibility and find ways to increase wages.

One example of a plan to give working parents flexibility is paid sick leave. It's a simple truth, if a parent's child is sick, or they are faced with difficult health issues on their own, they will have to miss work. It's my goal to make it manageable to be out of work when you or your

families actually are sick. President Obama puts it very well: “These policies aren’t workplace frills – they’re basic needs.”

Another important proposal for working families is raising the minimum wage. Wisconsin does better when we all do better. States around us are raising their minimum wages and Wisconsin families are being left behind. Raising the minimum wage would lift thousands out of poverty, increase consumer spending and help our economy.

Giving working families greater flexibility and opportunities is one of my highest priorities. In the next session, I plan to work on and introduce a paid sick leave law. Paid sick leave programs are in place in 3 states, and it is my hope to work to give families the flexibility they need. A law like Rhode Island’s would give families greater flexibility and help keep our families happy and healthy.

To learn more about the Summit on Working Families, go to [workingfamiliessummit.org](http://workingfamiliessummit.org) and join our effort to promote increased flexibility for working parents.